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ABSTRACT

Based on a November 1990 seminar attended by tutors and development workers from Open College Network (OCN) accredited programs, this paper describes principles and practice of assessment in OCN programs in Britain. The first two sections provide information on the seminar and define assessment. Section 3 lists assessment procedures for accreditation, for which tutors provide the following information: timing, who will perform the assessment, criteria, and forms. Section 4 discusses key features of assessment in OCNs identified during the seminar: (1) assessment procedures are clearly described and stated; (2) assessment procedures are not prescribed by the OCN; (3) assessment should enhance effectiveness of the learning process; (4) assessment must be appropriate to the target group; (5) assessment procedures must be consistent with program design; (6) assessment criteria must be consistent with program levels; (7) learners can be assessed and accredited at different levels within the same program; (8) assessment should be concerned with the learner's understanding of process and product; (9) all learners need not be assessed in the same form but, within each level, should be assessed to the same criteria; (10) assessment procedures are regularly reviewed and modified; (11) assessment procedures are enhanced through recognition and moderation; and (12) assessment is criterion referenced. (Appendixes, amounting to over one-half of the paper, include a checklist of good practices for mathematics tutors, a tutors' hint list for return to learning, contrasting approaches to art and craft, an example of assessment at different levels in art and design, and a brief description of the OCN accreditation framework and process.) (YLB)

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Assessment in Open College Networks

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A Snapshot

What is an Open College Network?

The term Open College Network (OCNs) is used to embrace Open College Networks, Federations and Consortia of local institutions and organisations concerned with providing learning opportunities for adults. They provide a flexible and comprehensive accreditation service as well as other complementary services which include staff and curriculum development. They serve both to attract more and different adults to participate in learning activities and also to facilitate their progression.

Who does it benefit?

OCNs aim to improve access and progression for all adults, but particularly for those who have gained little from their previous educational experience. Currently many adults are involved in learning that leads to no certificate or formal recognition of achievement. An important starting point for OCNs is that they offer accreditation for learning where none has been available in the past, enabling learners to build on their achievement and move forward between and within organisations. Accreditation ensures the quality and appropriateness of opportunities available.

Who is involved?

Members of OCNs cover the full range of providers of formal and informal learning opportunities in their region and those who provide information about them. These may include: Community and Voluntary Organisations, Employers and Chambers of Industry and Commerce, Adult Education Centres, Tertiary Colleges and Colleges of Further Education, Higher Education Institutions, Local Education Authorities, Educational Guidance Services for Adults and Careers Services and Training Centres.

What learning is accredited?

The accreditation framework encompasses a wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities available in the local community - adult and community education, work-based learning, experiential learning, education and training run through voluntary and community organisations and colleges. The OCN does not design learning programmes or provide the syllabus, but offers a mechanism for awarding credits for the learning outcomes achieved on programmes designed for specific groups and for specific purposes.

How is learning accredited?

Learning is accredited in a structure of levels and credits. The levels denote the degree of difficulty or complexity of the learning whereas the credits indicate the value of the learning. The process of accreditation is carried out by drawing on the expertise and experience of tutors in the field. Panels of tutors review learning programmes for their coherence particularly in relation to the target group for whom they are designed, and moderate learner achievements to ensure consistency for the award of credits.

What is happening nationally?

Ocns are linked nationally through the National Open College Network (NOCN) which develops policy on matters such as credit transfer and quality assurance. In 1990 NOCN developed a Credit Accumulation and Transfer Agreement enabling credits awarded by one OCN to be transferred to and recognised by other networks. In 1991 NOCN was formally established as an unincorporated association with 6 Members operating across some 40 LEAs, 7 Associates covering 9 LEAs and developments in other regions involving 25 LEAs.

an occasional paper

Assessment in Open College Networks

by Caroline Mager

Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide an illustrative description of the principles and practice of assessment in Open College Network accredited programmes. It is not an exhaustive review of assessment theory nor is it a catalogue of different assessment exercises.

The paper is intended to promote a wider understanding of assessment practices developed through OCNs. It aims to identify and describe those features of assessment which are crucial and which may distinguish assessment in OCN recognised programmes from assessment elsewhere. The paper is written for tutors and development workers in existing or developing OCNs and those with a broad interest in OCN practice.

The paper is one in a series of publications produced by UDACE to support the development, and understanding of, Open College Networks.

1.2 Origins

The paper is based on a two-day seminar held in November 1990, which was attended by tutors and development workers from a number of Open College Networks. The principles and models described in it were developed by the seminar group and refer to actual examples of assessment provided by individual members. Seminar participants were all experienced practitioners in the areas of Mathematics, Art and Craft or Return to Learn, and were tutors or moderators of OCN-accredited programmes or Development Officers for OCNs.

1.3 Context

The seminar was held at a time of rapid development in OCNs, both in terms of their geographical spread and the breadth of their work.

In March 1991, OCNs were established in:

the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton)

London (4 networks across inner London)

Greater Manchester and Cheshire

Merseyside

North West England

South West Wales

South Yorkshire

OCNs are under development in:

Birmingham

Cornwall and Devon

Dorset

Essex

Gloucestershire

Humberside

Leicestershire

the Midlands (Coventry, Solihull, and Warwickshire)

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

North and West Yorkshire

Oxfordshire

South East and North Wales

Surrey.

Considerable interest also exists in many other areas. The 10 established OCNs are currently working in over 50 LEAs: 60,000 learners hold OCN credits and yearly registrations now total nearly 20,000.

During 1990 all 10 established OCNs were also recognised as Authorised Validating Agencies by the Access Courses Recognition Group (ACRG) of the CNAA and CVCP. At the same time, developments nationally and locally are leading to the integration of NVQ units of competence into OCN programmes with arrangements being developed to enable learners to have those units recognised towards National Vocational Qualifications. These developments are taking place through agreements with Awarding Bodies, and with the support of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

OCNs therefore occupy a pivotal space in the field of post-16 education and training which has the potential to enable learners to transfer between vocational and academic systems. Against this background, it is hoped that a publication looking at one aspect of OCN activity will contribute to a wider understanding of their actual and potential role.

2 What is assessment?

Assessment is the process through which a person or a group's knowledge or skills are reviewed in order to evaluate what they have learned. However, assessment is not simply a tool used by the tutor to measure learners' achievements.

Assessment:

- **provides evidence** of progress and achievement to enable accreditation and progression;
- **allows learners to understand** the learning process in which they are involved and monitor their progress;
- **enables tutors to review** the effectiveness of their learning programmes in achieving the intended objectives.

Assessment can be carried out at different stages of a learning programme:

- **At the beginning of a programme:** to evaluate what skills and knowledge a learner already has in a particular area in order to analyse their learning needs. Increasingly such assessment is being used to offer accreditation of prior learning and exemptions and advanced standing for parts of a programme.
- **During a programme**: to measure progress and to review the effectiveness of the programme. OCNs can award credit for completion of part or all of the programme. Therefore, assessment is available at different points of a programme, and can provide the evidence for accreditation to take place if a learner leaves before the end.
- **At the end of a programme:** to evaluate the skills, knowledge and understanding a learner has achieved at the end of a learning process and provide the evidence for accreditation of these.

3 Assessment procedures

When tutors are submitting programmes for accreditation, OCNs ask them to provide information on:

- **the timing of assessments** - at what points these occur on the learning programme;
- **who will carry out the assessment** - whether the tutor does this, or the tutor plus learner together, the group, or the learner;
- **the criteria for assessment** - these provide the standards against which learning is measured (eg, 'can begin to structure and plan written assignments, providing an effective introduction and conclusion'; 'can use mailmerge facility');
- **forms of assessment** - for example, a diary, checklist, portfolio, written assignment, oral presentation. This will provide evidence of learning for the moderation process.

For OCN accreditation, all these aspects of assessment procedures must be clearly presented.

4 Key features of assessment in OCNs

The following key features were identified during the seminar.

1: Assessment procedures are clearly described and stated.

While OCNs do not prescribe assessment procedures they do require that these are clearly described. This is essential to enable:

- **learners** to be clear about what they are expected to demonstrate and how this can be done, and to make choices on these;
- **moderators** to carry out their role of monitoring the programme in operation and verifying learner achievement.

In OCNs, therefore, it must be clear what is being assessed. For example, if a learner is asked to produce a written assignment, it should be clear whether writing skills and/or content are being assessed.

It is not necessary to assess everything however. In some programmes assessment may be exclusively concerned with skills, in others it may include personal effectiveness. If a programme aims to develop self-confidence, then it will be appropriate for this to be assessed for the purpose of accreditation.

Principles of Good Practice:

- The learning outcomes being assessed should be clearly specified in order to facilitate progression.
- Assessment procedures, including criteria for assessment, should be explicit and public.

2: Assessment is criterion referenced.

Assessment criteria establish the standards against which learners' achievements are measured, and in OCNs are devised by the tutor to suit the aims of the programme, its content and intended target group. They relate directly to the level and are different at different levels in the same curriculum area.

OCN procedures ensure that the criteria against which achievement is to be judged are clear and public - offering learners greater control over, choice within, and understanding of, their learning activities. This differs from some traditional approaches where an individual's performance is graded by comparison with other candidates rather than external standards, and grading systems where learners' achievements are measured by percentages based on unspecified criteria.

3: Assessment procedures are not prescribed by the OCN.

Open College Networks (OCNs) do not tell tutors what assessment procedures that they should use. These are devised by tutors and organisers of learning programmes within the OCN framework of levels, sometimes in consultation with learners, and are scrutinised, modified and agreed through the recognition process.

Consequently, OCN accreditation encourages innovative and imaginative assessment methods. Tutors can design tailor-made programmes to meet the needs of particular groups of learners, with highly flexible assessment procedures, encompassing a range of approaches from experiential to formal. Established programmes can also be accredited through OCNs without necessarily having to change their operation, so long as they satisfy OCN quality assurance procedures.

This is different to the practice of many Awarding Bodies, who determine the length and content of courses as well as the assessment procedures.

Principle of Good Practice:

- Assessment processes can be varied, flexible and negotiable, while assessment criteria are fixed for different levels.

4: Assessment should enhance the effectiveness of the learning process.

Assessment procedures should not be tacked on to a learning programme, but should be an integral part of that programme, recognising their potential to contribute to learner development. Learner involvement in processes of review and evaluation of progress, achieved through assessment, develops skills of reflection and self-assessment in learners, increases awareness of their learning needs, and understanding of the learning process.

Principles of Good Practice:

- Assessment should be part of all learning programmes.
- Assessment should build the self-esteem of the learner.
- Assessment is not carried out exclusively for accreditation - it is used to measure progress, build self-confidence and review the learning programme.
- Assessment arrangements should encourage self-assessment by learners to promote independence.

5: Assessment must be appropriate to the target group.

The relevance and appropriateness of assessment to the target group is one of the key aspects of quality assurance in OCNs. This relates to the particular concern of OCNs to promote access to learning opportunities for those learners who traditionally have not had access to appropriate provision.

Assessment procedures must be relevant to the experience and culture of the learners for whom the programme is designed and must allow them to use and build on their own experience. For example, communications studies aiming to develop critical skills would need initially to focus on culturally familiar themes and these would vary for different target groups.

Principles of Good Practice:

- Assessment should be appropriate to the learning needs and styles of individuals and target groups and should enable learners to use familiar tasks to learn concepts.
- Learners should be encouraged to evaluate the assessment procedures to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

6: Assessment procedures must be consistent with the programme design.

OCNs require consistency between the assessment procedures and the design of the programme in terms of its aims, organisation and content. For example, **the form of assessment** and **the criteria for assessment** must be consistent with the aims of the programme and its content; **the timing of assessments** must fit the organisation of the programme. For example, if a programme aims to develop a learner's understanding of skills developed through life, it would be appropriate for these to be presented in the form of a CV; assessment of new skills should not be carried out too early in a programme before learners have been able to consolidate these.

7: Assessment criteria must be consistent with the level(s) of the programme.

Assessment criteria must reflect the level of the programme - criteria are the specific standards against which performance is measured. So for example, criteria in the area of communication might include:

Level 1: Begin to demonstrate awareness of some contrasts between English and first language or standard and non-standard English.

Level 2: Begin to keep records (eg, buy a file, organise with dividers, date, worksheets, etc.)

Level 3: Evaluate and describe own strengths and weaknesses in writing (eg, skills acquired, difficulties encountered).

Level 4: Understand and interpret complex writing assignments correctly and identify relevant information for inclusion.

(Liz Lawson, London Open College Federation)

An important function of the recognition panel in reviewing the consistency of a learning programme will be in ensuring, by drawing on the experience of peers, that assessment criteria are consistent with the levels at which learners are to be accredited. Where programmes are offered at several levels, criteria for assessment must be clear for each level.

8: Learners can be assessed and accredited at different levels within the same programme.

The OCN accreditation framework of levels and credits is extremely flexible. For example, programmes can offer credits at two or more levels by establishing appropriate assessment criteria for each level. This acknowledges that within the same group, learners may need to work at different levels, and emphasises progress and achievement rather than failure, by ensuring that learners can be assessed at the appropriate level. Learners may have a choice of assignments which are at different levels, or all learners may do the same assignment but aim to demonstrate different criteria.

Principle of Good Practice:

- Assessment procedures should allow learners to work at and be assessed at a level appropriate to their needs.

9: Assessment should be concerned with the learner's understanding of process as well as the product itself.

In certain curriculum areas, the learner's ability to understand and reflect upon the process may be as important as the product itself.

For example, in producing an artefact or article of clothing, the learner's understanding of the process of production, the choices made, reflection on decisions taken, recognition of mistakes and understanding of how these might be improved, are essential to evaluate the learner's achievement. Similarly, in maths, the learner's understanding of the steps taken in arriving at a particular solution are important in assessing the solution produced.

Traditional assessments, for example, in visual arts which rely on an exhibition of artefacts, do not recognise the importance of the process of production and the learner's understanding of it.

Principles of Good Practice:

- Assessment need not refer exclusively to product - the process of production and the underpinning understanding are frequently critical.

10: All learners need not be assessed in the same form, but, within each level, should be assessed to the same criteria.

For rigour to be ensured, the assessment criteria must be clearly established at each level at which a programme is offered. However, learners can negotiate the form of assessment and evidence of learning around the fixed and agreed criteria. Forms of assessment can be varied and creative and should not be seen as locked to a particular level. For example, level 3 and 4 need not be assessed exclusively in a written form and other forms of communication can be used.

Principles of good practice:

- Assessment arrangements should allow for negotiation of the form of assessment with the learner.
- Forms of assessment should be creative, innovative and varied.

11: Assessment procedures are regularly reviewed, evaluated and modified.

Through the moderation process, which both reviews the operation of the programme in action and verifies learners' achievement, assessment procedures are regularly reviewed and evaluated. This ensures that assessment procedures can change to meet evolving needs, and development is not halted through the recognition process. OCN processes enable review and change to be implemented systematically.

12: Assessment procedures are enhanced through recognition and moderation.

In the processes of recognition and moderation where assessment procedures are agreed and reviewed, tutors from different sectors and organisations can share experiences and learn from each others' approaches. This is particularly valuable where they are physically separated from each other and have few other opportunities to meet to discuss such issues. This is often the case, for example, with part-time tutors, tutors and trainers in voluntary organisations and small companies. OCNs offer staff development activities which are not confined to particular curriculum areas, and, since OCNs offer accreditation to all learning within the same framework, (unlike many traditional Awarding Bodies which specialise in particular curriculum areas), these enable exchange of expertise and experience across curriculum boundaries.

Appendix I

I - Mathematics: a checklist for tutors

To extend principles of good practice into a practical guide, the mathematics curriculum group at the UDACE seminar developed the following checklist.

1 Use assessment positively and creatively

Questions for Tutors:

Do assignments take account of a range of possible approaches?

Are they creative, open, supportive of learning?

What sort of feedback is provided?

Example 1:

To use a computer to learn a mathematical skill and produce mathematical evidence at the same time. For example, using a computer graphics programme to produce sketches and then using this information to evaluate an IT package.

a) Sample assignment

Terms of reference

- *To use an unseen software package with the help of a manual.*
- *To make judgements about the ease of use of the manual.*
- *To criticise the software in terms of its suitability for the tasks.*
- *To use the software to carry out certain tasks.*
- *Whilst using the software, to sketch the required graphs, note down any problems you have in understanding the software documentation. In addition, note any problems associated with the screen design, eg, clarity of menus, etc.*
- *On completion of the practical element of the assignment, write a short report outlining your criticisms of the software and related documentation.*

Example 2:

"Open-Book Testing" - where students are allowed to choose materials to do the test; for example, their own notes, tutor handouts, text books. This encourages students to be discriminating in choice of text books and in preparation of personal notes and therefore incorporates a study skills element, and can be

2 Encourage learners to use familiar tasks in order to learn a concept

Questions for Tutors:

Do assessment approaches:

- start where people are?
- take account of evidence from everyday life and experience?
- provide a relevant setting for demonstrating mathematical skills?

Example 1:

Making scones: *involves estimating, costing, using metric units, percentages, multiplications, ratios, and temperature conversion.*

Activities might include the following:

- *rewrite recipe using metric units;*
- *find cost of ingredients using graphs;*
- *calculate the loss/gain in weight after cooking;*
- *calculate the weight of each scone;*
- *calculate the cost per scone - this could be compared with shop prices;*
- *understanding oven temperatures;*
- *production of parallel conversion chart.*

Learners can identify and develop mathematical skills and negotiate the assignment individually with the tutor.

Example 2:

Statistics: *learners collect data that is interesting and relevant to them, rather than being given artificial data.*

For example, analysis of frequency of robins on Christmas cards, or of people at a bus stop at different times of the day, or of advertisements on television. Familiarity with material helps their evaluation and analysis of the data; collecting data requires judgements to be made. Other systems of assessment often provide artificial data.

3 Ensure that approaches to assessment are negotiable

Questions for Tutors:

Can learners negotiate:

- how they are assessed?
- the level at which they are assessed?
- the evidence they can present?

How do they know what is negotiable?

Example 1:

Within the agreed criteria, the learners can negotiate the level at which they work.

a) Sample assignment

Terms of reference:

After collecting data, between 50 - 100 pieces or items, the following learning objectives are to be achieved:

- *Collect data from practical observations or from publications.*
- *Determine a suitable number of classes for the data.*
- *Draw up a tally chart for the data.*
- *Calculate the frequency and the relative frequency.*
- *Represent the data in a suitable chart, fully labelled, eg, bar chart, component bar chart, pie chart, pictogram.*
- *Comment on and interpret the data summarised in tables and diagrams.*

Optional objectives:

- *Draw an ogive curve from cumulative frequencies.*
- *Draw a labelled histogram and frequency polygon.*

Results

The results are to be presented in table form, diagrammatic form and written form. It is not necessary to write a report but it would be useful to set down (a) how (and when) the data was collected, (b) any obvious comments/conclusions you can draw from your data. The results so presented are your evidence that you have achieved those objectives.

In addition, put in your presentation of work, definitions of the following statistical terms:

a) sample, b) population, c) discrete data, d) continuous data.

To obtain a credit at level 3:

- *Terms of reference are fully complied with:*
  - *data is collected, at least 50 pieces*
  - *numbers of classes suitable.*
  - *tally chart and one other chart in the findings, with some relevant labels*
  - *frequency and relative frequency calculated*
  - *some relevant comment on results*
- *Definitions requested are attempted and show understanding to a basic level.*

To obtain a credit at level 4:

The two criteria for level 3 must be met and in addition:

- *the optional objectives under the terms of reference above must be met.*
- *the data and/or comments about the data should show that analysis and judgement have been exercised.*
- *conclusions from the results of the simple statistical analysis should show relevance and validity.*
- *language used to communicate the analysis should be mainly free from spelling errors and grammatical mistakes.*
- *definitions must be correct and complete.*

Interpretation of graphic material can allow choice of written or oral form of assessment. Interpreting and criticising charts and graphs in a newspaper, for example, can be presented in a written or oral form.

4 Assessment should build self-esteem and provide support

Questions for Tutors:

How do assessments help my learners to:

- reflect on what they've learnt?
- learn about assessment?
- build self-esteem?
- get feedback about strengths and weaknesses?

What support is given to learners before, during and after the assessment?

Example 1:

Keeping diaries or records of the work done. This can be done by the learner or by the tutor in discussion with the learner if s/he doesn't have adequate language skills. Diaries can encourage evaluation by the learner.

Example 2:

A student review of the work which may be done individually as a statement or in a group with peer support. This may relate to the development of self- confidence rather than of mathematical skills.

Example 3:

Write down, in note form or in sentences, anything which worried you about coming on the course; worries such as family commitments, domestic duties as well as aspects to do directly with doing a course.

- *Having done the course, write down any of those worries which are still present.*
- *Identify the worries which turned out to be of little concern, once the course was underway.*
- *Write down anything about the course you enjoyed - apart from the academic work.*
- *If you feel able, identify any area in which you think you are different as a person.*
- *You will be unable to say how the course has prepared you for Higher Education until you are into the work, but do try and list the concerns you have about the next stage.*

What would you like to be doing, career wise, in ten years time?

Example 4:

At levels 3 and 4, in order to encourage learners to be critical of the learning being provided, critical skills can be developed by encouraging learners to criticise an intermediary. For example, they might be asked to criticise a calculator for its user-friendliness (the order in which data needs to be presented; the way answers are provided). Learners can then be encouraged to apply this critical approach to the learning programme as a whole.

5 Take account of the three dimensions of language in mathematics

Questions for Tutors:

Am I assessing their use of:

- symbolic language?
- mathematical jargon?
- descriptions of mathematical relationships in the vernacular?

Do my assessments take account of cultural bias?

Example 1:

A group session on Money Management where learners share experiences, for example, of a Building Society account, a bank account, etc.

This can be used to encourage learners to use mathematical language such as "interest", "simple interest", "compound interest"; and can be used to learn about articulating sums of money written down (eg, millions, billions) and rounding up numbers which are common practice in speech and newspaper reports.

Example 2:

Group session on reading and interpreting graphs which can be analysed and presented at various levels.

Example 3:

Competitive group task - setting a problem: for example, finding treasure on an island having been given bearings and geometrical information which will use mathematical concepts practically.

6 Explore the possibility of using one sort of assignment to demonstrate achievement at several levels

Questions for Tutors:

- Can assignments be accredited at different levels?
- Does the assessment help the learner to progress?

Example 1:

Task: Landscaping a garden. Students to design a garden, produce a scale drawing and cost it at current prices, working within a budget. Students to negotiate the size of the garden and amount of money to be spent. The amount of mathematics involved will depend on the student's interest and mathematical knowledge.

Level 2:
- Scale drawing of garden
- Design will include rectangular and square beds
- Costings of current prices
- Recording this information
- Considering extensions.

Level 3:
- Design will include more imaginatively shaped beds, eg,
- irregular beds, which will involve more complicated mathematical drawings and costings

Example 2:

Statistics assignments can be multi-level for the same group of people (see page 14 above).

Example 3:

Looking at number patterns: can be at a range of levels. For example, working out next number in a simple pattern, or working out a formula to find the tenth number in a complex pattern.

7 Move from structured to open-ended assignments

Questions for Tutors:

- Do assessments help learners to move from one right answer to a range of alternatives?
- Do students take increasing responsibility for their own learning?

Example 1:

A multi-staged process of assignments: These could range from giving learners all the steps necessary to provide the evidence, to giving them an aim or title only.

Example 2:

Giving learners the opportunity to develop skills in using text books. For example, giving learners one way of solving simultaneous equations and asking them to find out other ways using text books.

8 Be clear what assessment is for

Questions for Tutors:

- Do I need to assess everything?
- Do I need to assess everybody in the same way?
- Do my assessments take account of outside requirements/constraints?

Example 1:

Courses run nationally for NUPE by the WEA are subject to particular national requirements.

Example 2:

Competence in timed essay writing under exam conditions may be necessary in preparing learners for Higher Education.

Appendix II

II - Return to learning: a tutors' hint list

A what, why, how of assessment practice produced by the Return-to-Learning Group at the UDACE seminar.

HINTS	WHY	HOW
1. You organise assessment for your programme.	Because you know your group's learning needs.	By involving the course tutors and learners in discussion.
2. Make your assessment consistent with the objectives/ planned learning outcomes.	So the course hangs together and assessment assists the course rather than becoming an end in itself.	Decide aims and objectives; decide what you want learners to have at the end of the course.
3. Look at ways to assess process as well as **product.**	Because it is part of learning and encourages reflective skills.	Through appropriate assessment which allows checklists, group assessments, diaries, self-evaluation, portfolio including preparatory work.
4. Think about creating opportunities for assessing at more than one level.	To offer achievement to everyone.	Offer clear and different criteria for different levels of learning, so that you know when people have achieved.
5. Make these criteria explicit to learners.	To open the process so that learners know where they are going - demystifies procedures and judgements.	Present criteria to learners in a clear accessible form.

6. Make assessment flexible and varied.	So that assessment becomes appropriate to the needs of learners.	Use different forms of assessment - oral, display, video, practical activities, open book, radio, group work, diaries, logbooks. Forms of assessment are not locked to particular levels. Look around.
7. Look for opportunities to negotiate assessment with learners.	To extend the learning process and ensure relevance and increase motivation.	Discuss, where possible, with learning group. How would they like to be assessed/to learn. Build into your submission, ways of negotiating on assessment. Evaluate assessment with a view to development.
8. Make assessment contribute to the building of learners' self-confidence, and process of learning.	To build and liberate rather than inhibit and restrain.	Assessment is not external, it is part of the process. Build assessment into what learners do anyhow. Assessment allows learners to reflect on their progress.
9. Be creative, experiment! Try out new ideas and pass them on.	You will learn and develop that way.	Discuss with other tutors; collect assessment ideas from forums, support groups, recognition panels, feed your ideas in too.

Appendix III

III - Art and craft: a contrast of approaches

These examples in Art and Craft were chosen to provide contrasts in terms of levels of work and approaches, within the same curriculum area but comfortably accommodated within OCN accreditation and assessment procedures. Both programmes enable negotiation of targets within an agreed framework.

Access to Art and Design:	Basic Skills through Art and Craft:
Chesterfield College of Technology and Arts.	***Manchester College of Art and Technology.***
Target group:	
Broad ability range of adult returners who left school with no qualifications.	Specific, defined target group of people with learning difficulties coming from special schools and Accredited Training Centres.
Aims:	
To give learners access to the facilities and resources of the college so they can appropriate the visual arts for their own use, in their own culture, and to provide access to higher education.	To introduce learners to the basic skills required to enable them to proceed into art and craft areas, and to encourage greater independence through practical application of the skills leaned.

Approaches adopted:

To provide a facility which allows individuals to explore and develop skills of expression, study and critical development, a framework of level descriptors was established that allows learners to negotiate a learning contract with the tutor.

A syllabus was designed to provide learners with essential component skills to allow progress to be made on to art and design programmes. This required careful analysis of those component skills needed in different craft areas, (e.g. collage, weaving, needlework), so that learner asquisition and retention of skills could be assessed.

Assessment:

Learners negotiate their own programmes of activity and negotiate appropriate criteria for assessment, within the level framework agreed by the recognition panel.
(See appendix 4 for the level framework)

Goals, set by the tutor and learner, are assessed using a checklist system and regular observation by the tutor and learner. The system developed had to be non-written and demonstrate progress and retention of skills.

Level/s:

Levels 2, 3 and 4.

Levels 1 and 2.

Outcomes for learners:

Increased self-esteem.

Increased independence.

Enrichment of learners' lives.

Horizontal and vertical progression.

Appendix IV

IV - Assessment at different levels : access to art and design

This Appendix provides one example of a legitimate interpretation of levels in the area of Art and Design and should not be taken as definitive or prescriptive.

In **THEORETICAL STUDIES** the primary focus at every level is, by definition, conceptual. Distinctions between levels are therefore made on the basis of the changing focus of the working method adopted by the student in order to achieve an understanding of the ideas or in order to effectively tackle the issues involved.

At **LEVEL 2** the focus of the working method is primarily oral and collaborative. Evidence of learning at this level might be active and informed participation in, or contribution to, criticism, discussion and debate within the group. The central purpose of any written work is likely to be the expression of personal feelings and opinions.

At **LEVEL 3** the focus of the working method is primarily written and individual. Evidence of learning at this level might be a body of competently written work, around a negotiated topic, in which an exploration and understanding of ideas and issues is demonstrated. The central purpose of this written work is likely to be descriptive, demonstrating some understanding of the idea of objectivity and some knowledge of the vocabulary of art and design criticism, and informative, demonstrating some knowledge of the social/historical context of the work(s) being discussed.

At **LEVEL 4** work can be seen as a combination of the elements of Levels 2 and 3 but with an additional emphasis, as in Level 4 above, on self-motivation and self-direction. Evidence of learning at this level might be a body of work in which an appropriate topic for personal research is identified, adequately researched (the research being supported by notes, bibliographies or other materials which record the routes of enquiry taken), and competently presented as the theme of a seminar. The central purpose of this work is likely to be critical and evaluative, evidencing a knowledge of the social/historical context of the work being discussed and adopting an appropriate critical approach to it.

In **PRACTICAL STUDIES** levels 2, 3 and 4 can be summarised as skill-based, issue-based and problem-based respectively.

LEVEL 2 is characterised by a primary concern with the acquisition, exercise or improvement of practical and technical skills. In writing a Learning Contract for work at this level, the student might simply describe a plan of action, identifying those skills which s/he expects to utilise and develop. In writing an evaluation s/he might list new skills which s/he has acquired and/or itemise old skills which s/he has improved. In addition to that written evaluation, evidence of learning at this level would normally be a body of work in which those skills are competently demonstrated.

LEVEL 3 is characterised by an additional concern with the exploration of issues and ideas. In a Learning Contract at this level the student would normally be expected to identify the issues around which s/he is intending to work, to outline a plan of action and to make some reference to anticipated outcomes. In an Evaluation, through a process of reflection, s/he would be expected to demonstrate an emerging awareness and understanding of the conceptual base of the work. In addition to that written evaluation, evidence of learning at this level might be a body of work in which those issues and ideas are explored, supported by sketchbooks, diaries, log books or other materials which record the routes of enquiry taken.

LEVEL 4 can be seen as an accumulation of the previous two levels but is additionally characterised by the students' own identification of problems and ideas and by continued and consistent self-motivation and direction. Work at this level should be part of an on-going enquiry with a strong conceptual base. Learning Contracts and Evaluations will need to demonstrate an intellectual and critical rigour consistent with that. Other evidence of learning at this level would normally be a body of work in which those problems and ideas are identified and adequately tackled and in which decisions and judgements on practical and technical issues are appropriate to, and consistent with, the conceptual base. Work should be supported by sketchbooks, diaries, logbooks or other materials which record the routes of enquiry taken.

Appendix V

V - The OCN accreditation framework and process

This appendix provides a brief description of the OCN accreditation framework and process with particular reference to assessment.

1 The OCN accreditation framework

OCNs provide an accreditation framework of levels and credits.

Levels

The National Open College Network (NOCN) has agreed to operate within four levels which refer to the complexity of the learning and the degree of independence of the learner. The following level descriptors have been agreed by NOCN:

Level 1: the development of basic skills, concepts and practical activities.

Level 2: The consolidation of existing skills and the introduction of new skills, competences and areas of learning.

Level 3: The extension and application of skills and competences and the introduction of independent learning techniques.

Level 4: The development and independent application of a range of critical, reflective, creative and problem solving skills and competences.

Assessment on OCN accredited programmes therefore has to operate within this framework of levels. Critically, the criteria for assessment must be consistent with levels.

Credits

OCN credits are a mechanism for ascribing value to learning outcomes, rather than detailing all the skills and competences achieved. Learning outcomes and how they are to be achieved, including anticipated learning time necessary, are discussed and agreed in the recognition panel, and a value ascribed to them on the basis of a 30 hour credit.

For example, a learning programme which has 40 hours tutor contact time, and for which the tutor estimates that on average 20 hours independent learning are necessary, would give a total of 60 learning hours. On the basis of a 30 hour credit, as recommended by the National Open College Network, the programme would have a credit value of two.

Credits are crucial to the OCN framework since they provide a currency which can measure achievement in learning consistently across all areas. They also enable achievement to be accredited in small units.

On long programmes, tutors are asked to demonstrate how learners can be accredited for part completion, eg, if they leave after the first term. To ensure that they can get recognition for their learning, it is necessary for formative assessment to be carried out at regular intervals on a programme. Formative assessment will often be at a lower level than the summative assessment for the same programme, as learners are only part way through the learning process, so the assessment must demonstrate clearly the level at which a learner is achieving. The arrangements for awarding credits need also to be established.

Formative assessment in OCNs is therefore crucial to the flexible accreditation system that they offer.

2 The accreditation/quality assurance process

In considering assessment procedures in OCNs it is also necessary to understand the accreditation process they use; this has a profound impact on the nature of assessment procedures used. Quality assurance is carried out in two key stages:

Recognition: The process whereby a learning programme is scrutinised, modified and agreed by an OCN.

Moderation: The process whereby the OCN ensures that credits awarded in one area are comparable in level and value to similar programmes of learning in other areas, and through which the effectiveness of the learning programme in operation is evaluated.

Both recognition and moderation are carried out through peer group processes. Recognition is carried out through a panel, which brings together tutors and trainers experienced in a particular area of learning, with the tutors for those programmes, to scrutinise the consistency of their design. They are able to draw on their own expertise, share experiences, offer suggestions and identify any areas which are not clear or consistent.

In the moderation process, a panel of tutors is drawn together from a group of programmes in similar areas of study who, with the moderator, look at samples of learners' work to ensure consistency of levels, agree recommendations for awards of credits and review issues identified through the moderation process. Both these peer group processes offer opportunities for staff and curriculum development for members.

The application of the professional expertise of peers is therefore central to the quality assurance process, and to ensuring that consistency exists between programme design and assessment procedures. Assessment procedures are subject to close scrutiny by experienced peers and are modified and improved through that process.

The final stage of quality assurance is through a Validation or Course Recognition Committee. All OCNs have a similar body in their governing structures which has responsibility for overseeing the quality assurance process. This body scrutinises sample recognition and moderation reports, and may also confirm the award of credits to learners.

Appendix VI

VI - The seminar process

1 The Aims of the Seminar

The aims of the UDACE seminar were:

- to share experience in the area of assessment;
- to establish principles of good practice in assessment procedures;
- to agree models of good practice, in particular curriculum areas.

It was also intended from the planning stage that the seminar would result in a short publication highlighting findings which would be of interest to colleagues working within and outside OCNs.

2 Participants

The seminar focused on three areas of learning: Mathematics, Art and Craft and Return to Learning. Participants were all experienced in one or more of these areas and were either tutors who had submitted their own programmes for accreditation, were moderators for OCN-accredited programmes, or were development workers with OCNs. The focus on particular curriculum areas ensured that there was the necessary common experience between colleagues to share and discuss assessment practices in detail.

3 Process

The seminar process was discussed and agreed in the first session after which participants worked in curriculum groups. All participants were asked to bring with them examples of assessment procedures, and curriculum groups worked from these to identify principles of good practice and key features of assessment within OCNs.

These were shared with other groups through mutual exchanges of group members at the beginning of the second day. This enabled participants and facilitators to judge what degree of consistency was emerging, to learn from each other in a time-effective and participative manner, and avoided the need for a plenary session midway through the process.

In the final session, the curriculum groups turned the principles of good practice into guidelines or other documents which would be of practical use to other tutors. These were then presented to the full group in a final plenary session.

4 Outcomes

The seminar revealed very similar working practices in assessment between OCNs, and provided materials for the description of assessment in OCN recognised programmes above. The curriculum groups all identified key features which relate specifically to assessment in OCNs. These have been combined with principles of good practice which also emerged from discussion.

In addition, the seminar produced a practical checklist and hints for tutors to use in designing assessment procedures, and two examples in the area of art and craft which demonstrate in some detail how tutors have been able to use an OCN framework to incorporate very different assessment procedures.

Apart from the outcomes reflected in this publication, there were important benefits resulting from relationships built between tutors from different OCNs, and the opportunities that the seminar offered for detailed curriculum discussion. It is hoped that these opportunities will be sustained through cross-OCN monitoring and evaluation which is being established to support the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Agreement between Members of NOCN.

Further Reading

More detailed information on OCNs is available from individual OCNs or from the following UDACE publications:

'Open College Networks:Current Development and Practice' by David Browning and Caroline Mager. (Price £1.00)

'Open College Networkss: A Handbook' by Caroline Mager. (Price £40.00)

'Open College Networks and National Vocational Qualifications' by Caroline Mager. (Price £2.00)

'Developing Open College Networks' by David Browning and Caroline Mager. (Price £3.50)

To order these publications please contact:

Publications Sales Department
NIACE
19B De Montfort Street
Leicester

Assessment Workshop

Participant List
8-9 November 1990

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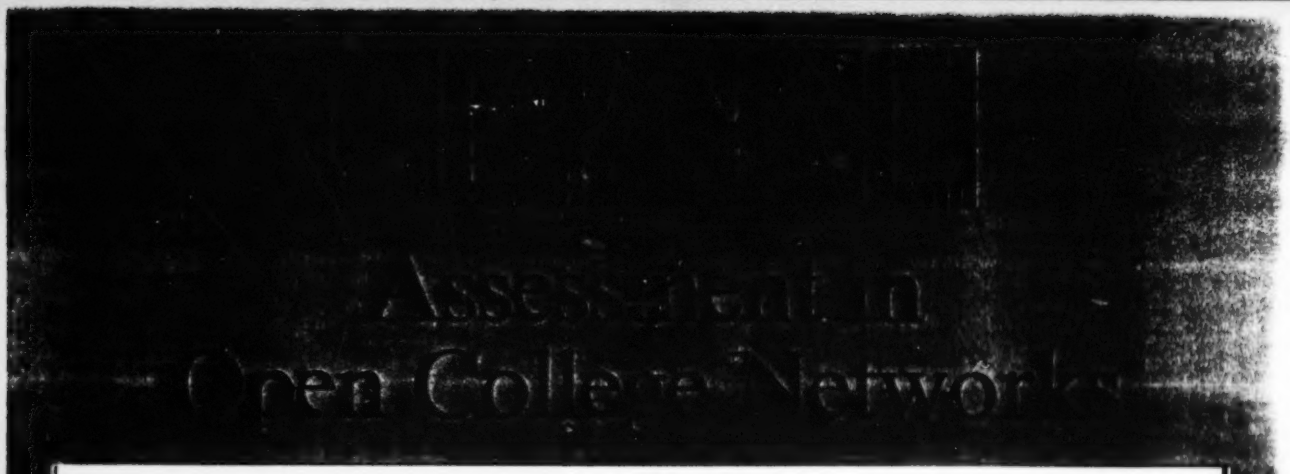

What is UDACE?

The Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education in England and Wales was created by the Secretary of State for Education and Science within the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

The Unit examines areas of possible development in the education of adults, recommends strategies for development and sponsors projects to encourage development.

The overall pattern of the Unit's activity is decided by a Steering Committee which usually works through small development groups of experienced practitioners to examine particular topics.

The Steering Committee gives priority in its work to topics where development

- **will improve access to learning opportunities for adults**
- **will contribute to the creation of a more coherent service of education for adults**
- **is likely to improve the quality of learning opportunities available to adults**

and, where initiatives by the Unit, including the publication of recommendations, guidelines or reports, of the sponsoring of investigations or projects are likely to lead to major improvements in the service.

Steering Committee Membership

Chairman Dick Smethurst

Department of Education and Science
Andrew Wye John Fairhurst SI

Welsh Office Education Department
JM Laughame HMI

TEED
Ros Seyd

Local Authority Associations
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